



# DRUGS

New Internationalist  
Easier English lesson  
Upper Intermediate

## The lesson today:

Introduction: speaking  
and vocabulary

Reading: for detail and  
for gist

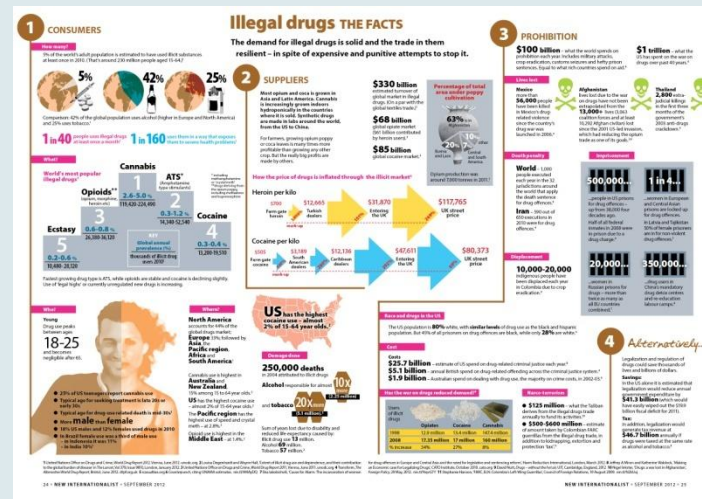
Speaking: role-play

## In small groups:

- 1) List all the illegal drugs you know
- 2) List all the reasons you can think of for making illegal drugs legal

# Match these:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) ecstasy, cocaine,<br>heroin, cannabis,<br>amphetamines,<br>marijuana and<br>opium | a) illegal   |
| 2) prohibition   | b) something that makes<br>your brain change           |
| 3) illicit   | c) illegal drugs                                       |
| 4) legalization  | d) making something no<br>longer a criminal<br>offence |
| 5) psycho-active   | e) making something<br>legal                           |
| 6) decriminilization   | f) not allowing something                              |



The next slide shows lots of facts about drugs.

You have 5 minutes to come to the board and try to remember as many facts about drugs as you can. Then tell each other.



# 1 CONSUMERS

## How many?

5% of the world's adult population is estimated to have used illicit substances at least once in 2010. (That's around 230 million people aged 15-64.)<sup>1</sup>

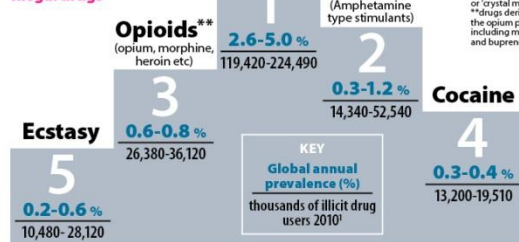


Comparison: 42% of the global population uses alcohol (higher in Europe and North America) and 25% uses tobacco.<sup>1</sup>

**1 in 40** people uses illegal drugs at least once a month<sup>1</sup> **1 in 160** uses them in a way that exposes them to severe health problems<sup>1</sup>

## What?

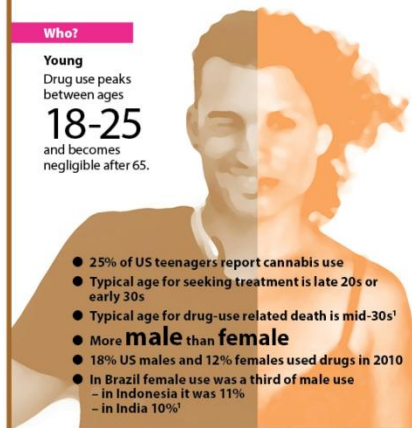
### World's most popular illegal drugs<sup>1</sup>



Fastest growing drug type is ATS, while opioids are stable and cocaine is declining slightly. Use of 'legal highs' or currently unregulated new drugs is increasing.

## Who?

Young  
Drug use peaks between ages  
**18-25**  
and becomes negligible after 65.



- 25% of US teenagers report cannabis use
- Typical age for seeking treatment is late 20s or early 30s
- Typical age for drug-use related death is mid-30s<sup>1</sup>
- More **male** than female
- 18% US males and 12% females used drugs in 2010
- In Brazil female use was a third of male use
- In Indonesia it was 11%
- In India 10%<sup>2</sup>

## Where?

**North America** accounts for 44% of the global drugs market; **Europe** 33%; followed by **Asia**, the **Pacific region**, **Africa** and **South America**.<sup>1</sup>

Cannabis use is highest in **Australia** and **New Zealand**, 15% among 15 to 64 year olds.<sup>2</sup>

**US** has the highest cocaine use – almost 2% of 15-64 year olds.<sup>2</sup> The **Pacific region** has the highest use of speed and crystal meth – at 2.8%.<sup>2</sup>

Opioid use is highest in the **Middle East** – at 1.4%.<sup>2</sup>

# Illegal drugs THE FACTS

The demand for illegal drugs is solid and the trade in them resilient – in spite of expensive and punitive attempts to stop it.

## 2 SUPPLIERS

Most opium and coca is grown in Asia and Latin America. Cannabis is increasingly grown indoors hydroponically in the countries where it is sold. Synthetic drugs are made in labs around the world, from the US to China.

For farmers, growing opium poppy or coca leaves is many times more profitable than growing any other crop. But the really big profits are made by others.

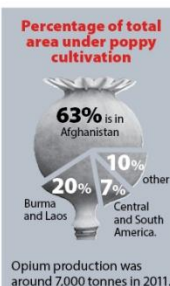
### How the price of drugs is inflated through the illicit market<sup>4</sup>



**\$330 billion** estimated turnover of global market in illegal drugs. (On a par with the global textiles trade.)<sup>1</sup>

**\$68 billion** global opiate market (\$61 billion contributed by heroin users).<sup>1</sup>

**\$85 billion** global cocaine market.<sup>2</sup>



## 3 PROHIBITION

**\$100 billion** – what the world spends on prohibition each year. Includes military attacks, crop eradication, customs seizures and hefty prison sentences. Equal to what rich countries spend on aid.<sup>4</sup>

**\$1 trillion** – what the US has spent on the war on drugs over past 40 years.<sup>4</sup>

### Lives lost

**Mexico** more than **56,000** people have been killed in Mexico's drug-related violence since the country's drug war was launched in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

**Afghanistan** lives lost due to the war on drugs have not been extrapolated from the **13,000+** lives (3,063 coalition forces and at least 10,292 Afghan civilian) lost since the 2001 US-led invasion, which had reducing the opium trade as one of its goals.<sup>5,6</sup>

**Thailand** **2,800** extra-judicial killings in the first three months of the government's 2003 anti-drugs crackdown.<sup>4</sup>

### Death penalty

**World** – 1,000 people executed each year in the 32 jurisdictions around the world that apply the death sentence for drug offences.<sup>4</sup>

**Iran** – 590 out of 650 executions in 2010 were for drug offences.<sup>4</sup>

### Imprisonment

**500,000...**

...people in US prisons for drug offences – up from 38,000 four decades ago. Half of all federal inmates in 2008 were in prison due to a drug charge.<sup>4</sup>

**1 in 4...**

...women in European and Central Asian prisons are locked up for drug offences. In Latvia and Tajikistan 50% of female prisoners are in for non-violent drug offences.<sup>7</sup>

### Displacement

**10,000-20,000** indigenous people have been displaced each year in Colombia due to crop eradication.<sup>4</sup>

**20,000...**

...women in Russian prisons for drugs – more than twice as many as all EU countries combined.<sup>7</sup>

**350,000...**

...drug users in China's mandatory drug detox centres and re-education labour camps.<sup>4</sup>

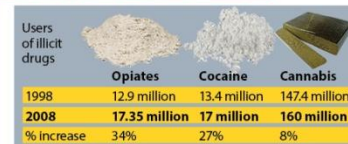
### Race and drugs in the US

The US population is **80%** white, with **similar levels** of drug use as the black and hispanic population. But 45% of all prisoners on drug offences are black, while only **28%** are white.<sup>4</sup>

### Cost

**Costs**  
**\$25.7 billion** – estimate of US spend on drug-related criminal justice each year.<sup>8</sup>  
**\$5.1 billion** – annual British spend on drug-related offending across the criminal justice system.<sup>4</sup>  
**\$1.9 billion** – Australian spend on dealing with drug use, the majority on crime costs, in 2002-03.<sup>4</sup>

### Has the war on drugs reduced demand?



### Narco-terrorism

- **\$125 million** – what the Taliban derives from the illegal drugs trade annually to fund its activities.<sup>10</sup>
- **\$500-\$600 million** – estimate of amount taken by Colombian FARC guerrillas from the illegal drug trade, in addition to kidnapping, extortion and protection 'tax'.<sup>11</sup>

## 4 Alternatively...

Legalization and regulation of drugs could save thousands of lives and billions of dollars.

**Savings:** In the US alone it is estimated that legalization would reduce annual government expenditure by **\$41.3 billion** (which would have easily wiped out the \$19.9 billion fiscal deficit for 2011).

**Tax:** In addition, legalization would generate tax revenue at **\$46.7 billion** annually if drugs were taxed at the same rate as alcohol and tobacco.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2012*, Vienna, June 2012. unodc.org <sup>2</sup> Louisa Degenhardt and Wayne Hall, 'Extent of illicit drug use and dependence, and their contribution to the global burden of disease' in *The Lancet*, Vol 379, Issue 9810, London, January 2012. <sup>3</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2011*, Vienna, June 2011. unodc.org <sup>4</sup> Transform, *The Alternative World Drug Report*, Bristol, June 2012. dtpf.org.uk <sup>5</sup> *icasualties.org* <sup>6</sup> *Counterpunch*, citing UNAMA estimates. <sup>7</sup> *nin11/M4AyDQ* <sup>8</sup> Eka Iakobishvili, 'Cause for Alarm: The incarceration of women for drug offences in Europe and Central Asia and the need for legislative and sentencing reform', Harm Reduction International, London, March 2012. <sup>9</sup> Jeffrey A Miron and Katherine Waldo, 'Making an Economic case for Legalizing Drugs', CATO Institute, October 2010. cato.org <sup>10</sup> David Nutt, *Drugs – without the hot air*, UIT, Cambridge, England, 2012 <sup>11</sup> Nigel Inkster, *Drugs: a war lost in Afghanistan*, Foreign Policy, 29 May, 2012. <sup>12</sup> nin11/NqVGY <sup>13</sup> Stephanie Hanson, 'FARC: Colombia's Left-Wing Guerrillas', Council of Foreign Relations, 19 August 2009. nin11/N2kUuj

Now read:

Find as many reasons as possible  
for legalizing or decriminalizing  
drugs:

[http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Make\\_drugs\\_legal](http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Make_drugs_legal)

Compare with other learners.

# Questions:

What questions do you have about drugs being made legal?

Write some questions in pairs  
eg. If all drugs were legal, what would happen?



## Speaking / role-play:

In pairs, A is a journalist and B is a doctor

A needs to interview the doctor about what would happen if all drugs were legal.

A ask and B answer some of the questions on the next 2 slides:

- 1) Why do you think that making drugs legal might make things better?
- 2) Don't you worry, as a doctor, that making drugs legal would increase the use of dangerous drugs?
- 3) How could we protect children and young people?
- 4) After drugs were made legal, how would they be controlled?
- 5) Isn't it better to change the way people think – better than making dangerous drugs legal?
- 6) Is it true that people who can't stop using drugs might be controlled by the drugs? So people who make the laws must protect them from themselves?

- 7) If drugs are legal, will there be a private free market for drugs?
- 8) Would hard drugs become cheap?
- 9) Do you think that some drugs, eg. crack cocaine, should be illegal for health or social reasons?
- 10) Even if we make drugs legal, is it possible that there will still be a “black” market?
- 11) Has any country or region tried legalization of drugs and been successful?
- 12) How could legalization happen? Could it be in all countries and suddenly?
- 13) Where can I find out more information?

Now read the answers the doctor gave and find some differences:

[http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/If\\_all\\_drugs\\_were\\_legal,\\_what\\_would\\_happen%3F](http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/If_all_drugs_were_legal,_what_would_happen%3F)

## Writing:

In pairs, write a letter to your country's leader:

- summarizing some of the arguments for legalizing drugs and
- saying if you think this should happen, and
- why.

Now read the original versions  
of the two texts:

<http://www.newint.org/features/2012/09/01/illegal-drugs/>

<http://www.newint.org/features/2012/09/01/drugs-legalization/>